

SOME ADVANTAGES OF DOING YOUR OWN DRAWINGS

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An editor once wrote concerning a drawing of ours, "We will use the illustration this time although it is somewhat rough. Next time get a commercial artist to do it for you." We believe his advice unsound.

The drawing, although not as aesthetically pleasing as one done by a commercial artist (or scientific illustrator) was taxonomically and proportionally correct. We feel that the main purpose of a scientific illustration is to give the reader a visual diagnostic picture of the object or subject referred to in the text. No doubt an accurate drawing is worth a thousand words especially to the taxonomist describing complex structures.

Many entomologists are discouraged in their attempts to make drawings of insects because of lack of confidence in their artistic ability. We urge them to make an effort to draw. The experience can be rewarding and perhaps result in a more accurate and useful drawing than can otherwise be achieved. Once confidence is acquired many articles can be illustrated that otherwise might not be illustrated.

Several years ago at the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco, Hugh Leech showed one of us (IM) the original drawings made by Adelbert Fenyés for his Aleocharinae section of the *Genera Insectorum* (Fasc. 173A, B, C. 1918-21). Fenyés' drawings were done on quadrille paper, nicely colored, and looked very much like the insects portrayed. They were, however, of a size smaller than desirable for the publication. They are obviously not the illustrations used. It is apparent that the editor engaged a commercial artist to redraw the pictures. The beautifully hand colored plates in that work are obviously the work of a skilled artist. They make an elegant showing; but, unfortunately, they are so badly distorted that many of them only slightly resemble the species they are alleged to represent. Anyone familiar with the insects can verify this at a glance. Fenyés' drawings, although not done with the same craftsmanship, would have served the purpose much better.

One of the greatest advantages of doing your own drawings is that it sharpens the perceptions; details which otherwise were casually noticed must now be concentrated on in order to be properly reproduced. In making one's own drawings those of us who are not too artistically inclined generally begin by making precise checks on drawings of closely related species previously illustrated by other authors. The gross aspect and alignment of the new subject is then made similar to those previously described, lending greater continuity to the illustrations. Minute details are scrutinized, generally yielding a greater understanding of the articulation and perhaps function of the object explored.

The student of a taxon knows best the characters which should be portrayed. It may be, for example, that the shape or proportions of one or several segments of the antennae are the most important taxonomic characters available. The student understands this and makes a special effort to portray this. An untrained artist, even when shown, may not understand the aspect which is of greatest value and consequently make taxonomic errors in the drawings; it is up to the taxonomist to detect these errors and have them corrected. Cost and the availability of an artist are also important factors to be considered.

Some suggestions which may be helpful in drawing insects were given by Anderson (*Bio. Science* 16:758-759. 1966), Moore (*Coleopt. Bull.* 28:26. 1974), Orth and Moore (*Coleopt. Bull.* 28:180. 1974), and Micheli (*Coleopt. Bull.* 29:74. 1975).

